



MASONIC HISTORY.

Interesting Information Concerning
this Organization in New Mexico.

Fifty Years' Growth Detailed by a Former
Grand Master of the Grand
Lodge.

Free Masonry came to New Mexico with the American occupation. As elsewhere in the United States during the past 100 years, wherever the stars and stripes were planted, closely followed the institution of a Masonic lodge.

On August 18th, 1846, General Kearney took possession of the city of Santa Fe, then the capital of the Mexican territory of New Mexico, extending north to the Nepests or Arkansas river, east to the 100th meridian, west to the Mogolon mountains, the Moqui Pueblo and the head waters of the Rio Grande and south to the state of Chihuahua and in a little more than a year thereafter, Free Masonry planted its banner of Friendship, Morality and Brotherly love in the city of the Holy Faith, and the natives beheld for the first time the square and compasses and the white lambskin aprons, indicating that a new era had arisen and that the mystic craft had been firmly established in their midst.

On October 18th, 1847, Hardin lodge No. 87, a military traveling lodge with the first regiment of Illinois volunteers, was instituted at Santa Fe, by Colonel John Ralls, grand master of the grand lodge of Missouri. This lodge started with a membership of forty, mostly army officers, and worked Santa Fe during the years 1847, 1848, 1849 and 1850 and was succeeded by Montezuma lodge, No. 109, to which a charter was granted by the grand lodge of Missouri, May 8th, 1851.

For several years, these were the only lodges in all the vast Territory, now contained in western Kansas, western Nebraska, the two Dakotas, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Montana, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico, Idaho, western Texas, California, Arizona, the Indian Territory and Oklahoma.

Many of the foremost citizens and pioneers of New Mexico were members of Montezuma lodge. A few of these will be named: Supreme Court Justices Joab Houghton, Merrill Ashburst, Kirby

Benedict, S. B. Axtell and Henry L. Waldo; Kit Carson, famous scout and Indian fighter, and brigadier general U. S. volunteers, whose trusted rifle was left as an heirloom at the time of his death in 1883, to that lodge, and is still in its possession; ex-lieutenant governor, Lafayette Head, of Colorado, who was made a Mason, in 1851, and is now a resident of that state; Brigadier General J. H. Carleton, U. S. A., who was made in 1856, and commanded the military department of New Mexico, during and after the late war, between the states; Delegates Milguel A. Otero, C. P. Clever, Stephen B. Elkins, Antonio Joseph, and T. B. Catron, Col. Ceran St. Vrain, who commanded federal troops, to put down the Pueblo Indian insurrection in 1847, during which Governor Charles Bent, also a Mason, was assassinated; Wm. W. Griffin, president of the first national bank organized in New Mexico, Solomon Jacob Spiegelberg, Levi Spiegelberg, Gustave Elsberg and Zadoc Staab, who organized wholesale trading establishments in Santa Fe, way back in the early '50s, and many others whose names are well and favorably known to the people of New Mexico, who were prominent and important factors in New Mexico politics and business and are closely identified with its history, development and advancement.

Chapman lodge at Las Vegas has the honor of being the next oldest; it was instituted under charter granted by the grand lodge of Missouri, June 2nd 1862, and is now number 2 on the New Mexico registry. It is in a flourishing condition and to it belongs the credit of possessing the finest temple in western Kansas, southern Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Indian Territory, western Texas and southern California.

June 4th, 1866, Aztec lodge No. 3 at Las Cruces was instituted under charter granted by the grand lodge of Missouri.

October 17th, 1873, Silver City lodge was instituted, also under charter from the grand lodge of Missouri.

Union Lodge at Fort Union was instituted also under charter from the grand lodge of Missouri, May 30th, 1874.

From 1865 to 1875, there existed also in the territory three lodges under charters from the grand lodge of Missouri. Bent lodge No. 205 at Taos, Kit Carson lodge 346 Elizabethtown and Cimarron lodge No. 348 at Cimarron.

On August 8th, 1877, a Masonic con-

vention, consisting of the masters and wardens of Montezuma, Chapman, Aztec and Union lodges, was called to order by the then governor, S. B. Axtell, and the grand lodge of New Mexico was formally organized at Santa Fe, by the election of grand officers and the adoption of a constitution and by-laws. The first grand officers were: W. W. Griffin, grand master; W. L. Rynerson, deputy grand master; S. B. Newcomb, grand senior warden; G. W. Stebbins, grand junior warden; Willi Spiegelberg, grand treasurer, and David J. Miller, grand secretary. The membership of the four lodges numbered 165 Master Masons. The Silver City lodge declined to join the organization.

The grand lodges throughout the globe then recognized the new grand lodge promptly, except Missouri, which stood for a time by Silver City lodge, but the right and justice and Masonic equity being with New Mexico, Missouri accorded finally full recognition and the Silver City lodge acknowledged the grand lodge of New Mexico, as its lawful superior and the supreme Masonic authority in New Mexico. Since then, peace and harmony have prevailed in the jurisdiction and the growth of the grand lodge while it has not been rapid has been steady and sure and the craft is in a very prosperous condition.

Upon the register, today, there are counted twenty lodges, located as follows: Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Watrous, Raton, Socorro, San Marcial, Las Cruces, Deming, Silver City, Chlo-ride, Georgetown, Eddy, Roswell, White Oaks, Chama, Farmington, Cerrillos, Gallup and Clayton. The membership of these aggregates over 1,000 at this writing.

Of the grand officers in 1877, all but Judge S. B. Newcomb, of Las Cruces, and Hon. Willi Spiegelberg, now of New York, have joined the silent majority.

For the present year, the following are the grand officers: J. J. Kelley, of Silver City, grand master; Dr. J. H. Wroth, of Albuquerque, deputy grand master; Geo. L. Wyllis, of Cerrillos, grand senior warden; Chester D. Stevens, of Raton, grand junior warden, F. H. Kent, of Albuquerque, grand treasurer and A. A. Keen, of Albuquerque, grand secretary.

The past grand masters of the grand lodge are the following well known citizens of New Mexico: S. B. Newcomb,